

# News Release



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## GOVERNOR GRAY DAVIS EXTENDS OFF-HIGHWAY RECREATION PROGRAM

SACRAMENTO – Gov. Gray Davis has signed legislation continuing California's off-highway recreation program to 2007, the result of a collaboration of environmental, law enforcement and OHV organizations, State Parks Director Rusty Areias announced today.

"This extension is very important because it gives the Legislature, the administration and all those interested in off-highway recreation issues the opportunity to continue their ongoing dialogue on this subject," Areias said.

The measure, AB 723 by Assemblyman Juan Vargas (D-San Diego), extends from January 2003 to January 2007 the sunset date of the Off-Highway Motor Vehicle Recreation Act of 1988, and the \$8 special fee that is included in each off-highway vehicle registration.

The program is designed to foster effectively managed areas for off-highway recreation, and provide conservation and enforcement for ecologically balanced recreation. Without management, illegal riding would increase and result in significant environmental damage, as was the case prior to the development of the state's OHV program, Areias said.

California has the greatest number of OHV enthusiasts in the United States. Off-highway recreation annually generates more than \$3 billion for the state's economy and supports 43,000 jobs, according to a report from California State University, Sacramento.

California State Park's OHV program has been reviewed and reauthorized since 1982, when the OHV Commission was created. The OHV program's sunset was extended in 1995 until January 1, 2003.

Karen Schambach, president of the Center for Sierra Nevada Conservation and a member of the OHV Stakeholders Roundtable, said, "Mr. Vargas' bill gives us time to see if recent reforms to the State's off-road vehicle program will reduce vehicle damage and user conflicts on our National Forests and Bureau of Land Management lands."

(more)

Schambach added, “If the reforms show on-the-ground benefits, we’ll look forward to making them permanent. If environmental damage and displacement of non-motorized users continue, the extension allows us to work with other stakeholders to try to find solutions.”

Don Klusman the California Association of 4 Wheel Drive Clubs’ natural resource consultant , said, “We are looking forward to working on establishing the OHV Program as the premier model of how to protect the environment and enjoy our public lands.”

Support for the bill was reflective of the membership of the Stakeholders Roundtable, an advisory group to the OHMVR Commission and the OHMVR Division. The Stakeholders Roundtable was convened in May 2000 at the direction of Gov. Davis and State Parks Director Areias. Stakeholders, who meet monthly, agreed unanimously to support Vargas’ bill at their February meeting and also agreed to abstain from offering independent amendments to the legislation without concurrence from other stakeholders.

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